

I Didn't Choose This Life, but I'm Happy with It by ThePinkTeenager

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Summary:

Max Mayfield and Elle Wheeler are single mothers who've been living together for years. At first, it was purely practical- Elle was newly widowed, with two young boys and no car. Over the years, they grew closer, but insist that they are still just friends. Then Max's daughter comes home and says a classmate asked about her nonexistent dad. This leads to a discussion about their decidedly unusual household.

Note: I will not be using the term "Queerplatonic relationship" because it would be somewhat anachronistic.

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Author's Note:

- In response to a [prompt](#) by [Dodoa](#) in the [GenAndAroPrompts](#) collection.

Prompt:

I'd love to see the following:

Two (or more) adults end up in an ambiguous, non-romantic, non-sexual co-parenting situation that really looks like a QPR. They never quite define their relationship to each other beyond that they are raising a child (or more) together. Up to you whether they just really don't care about labelling it, or think their situation is too unique for there to possibly be a label for it. I'd prefer if they weren't familiar with the concept of QPRs though. Until, one day they try to sit their (about tween to teenage) child down to explain, you know, the "We know our family is a bit unusual..." talk. It's up to you what prompted that talk (some incident at school or with extended family or something). And then their child, being somewhat more internet savvy and more clued in to these things, just interrupts them and goes: "It's called a QPR, what's the big deal? Oh my god parents are so embarrassing/annoying/cringy" Or something along those lines. The reaction from the parents is totally up to you, do they not care at all, do they embrace the new concept, is it a complete epiphany to them...

Elle picked up the phone and dialed Max's number. She heard the phone ring for a bit before Max answered. "Hello, this is Max Mayfield." she said.

"Hi Max." said Elle.

“Elle!” said Max. “It’s good to hear from you! What’s going on?”

Elle sighed. She knew this was insane, but she was at her wit’s end. “I know you’re busy with Luna and work, but can I move in with you?”

“Why?” Max wasn’t antagonistic; just curious.

“It’s just... ever since Mike died, things have been so hard. Karen and Ted babysit the boys, thank God, but I don’t have a car and money’s going to be an issue soon. You’ve been doing this for three years; I thought maybe you could help.”

“I see.” said Max. “Elle, I live in a two-bedroom apartment. I think it’s best if I move in with you.”

That actually sounded like a really good idea. “That’s a better idea.” said Elle. “You and Luna can sleep in the spare bedroom. Can you get to work from my house?”

“It’ll be a slightly longer commute, but I can do it.” said Max. “If I start packing right away, I can come over on Saturday.”

“Sounds good.” said Elle.

The two women then spent twenty minutes chatting. They’d met each other and Mike in middle school. When they weren’t saving the world from supernatural monsters, they’d hung out in Mike’s basement or went to the movies. Elle had lived in a different state for a while, but she’d returned to Indiana after high school. Now Max lived in a nearby town and Mike’s parents lived half an hour away. It was a silver lining to otherwise tragic circumstances.

An hour later, Elle and her two sons sat at the dinner table. It still felt a little empty without Mike there. Elle wished he was there, or wished that he was simply working late. But Mike had died in a car accident last month. He would never sit at the dinner table again.

“Hey boys,” she said, “Remember Max and Luna?”

“Yeah.” said Jimmy, the older boy.

“They’re coming over on Saturday. They’re going to live with us now.”

Jimmy looked at his mother. “Is Max gonna be my mom?”

Elle laughed. “No sweetie.” she said. “I will still be your mom. She’s just a friend who’s staying here to help me do things.” She had to explain the situation in a way that a five-year-old could understand.

“Okay.” said Jimmy.

True to her word, Max arrived on Saturday. She had two suitcases and her daughter Luna with her. Elle looked at the two of them with mild amusement.

“Need help?” she asked.

“I think I’m good.” said Max. “But please, show me where the spare bedroom is.”

Elle led them to the room. It was a guest bedroom and had little furniture except for a bed and a dresser, but it would do. Max put the suitcases next to the dresser.

“Whewe aw Dimmy and Peede?” asked Luna.

“They’re playing in the yard.” answered Elle.

“Luna, go out and play with them.” said Max.

Luna eagerly ran out the door.

Max turned to Elle. “You can stay.” she said. “I just didn’t want her messing up everything once I opened the suitcases.”

Elle chuckled. She had a toddler of her own and was familiar with the messes.

“So,” she said, “I guess we’re single moms now.”

Max opened the suitcase and started unpacking. “Neither of us

chose to be single moms.” she said. “The difference is that you got here by loss, whereas I had sex with a bartender.”

“You- nevermind.” Elle decided not to ask when, where, or why Max had sex with a bartender. It wasn’t really out of character for her- just a little wild.

“Sorry.” said Max. “I really shouldn’t have said that.”

“It’s fine.” said Elle.

Max changed the subject. “So, about the car...” she said.

“Mine was totaled in the accident. We’ll have to share yours.” she said.

“I’m sure we can work something out.” said Max. “I need it to get to work, but you can have it at night and on Sundays.”

“That works.” said Elle. “What about food?”

“I get home pretty late, but I can make breakfast.” she offered.

“Good. The only breakfasts I can make are cereal and Eggos.” said Elle.

Max laughed. “Still an Eggo lover, I see.” she said.

Elle nodded. That was the one thing that hadn’t changed throughout all these years.

Ten Years Later

Max went inside, hung her coat up, and sat on the couch. It had been a long day.

Peter entered the living room. “Hi Max.” he said. “Mom called after we got home. She missed the bus and has to get a ride from her boyfriend. She won’t be home until six.”

Elle had dated various men since Mike’s death. Max herself

preferred not to date, but she wasn't against Elle doing so. Really, it was only a problem when said boyfriend saw Max and assumed she was Elle's girlfriend. Those conversations were awkward at best and derogatory at worst. After a particularly bad incident a few years ago, Elle had stopped bringing men to the house altogether. Today was evidently an exception.

Max sighed. "That means I have to make dinner," she said. "Do you have any homework?"

"Yeah. I was doing it when I heard you come in."

"Okay, Petie. Finish your homework. Holler if you need help."

Peter went upstairs. Max went into the kitchen and started cooking. They had two teenagers and a preteen now, which meant she had to cook a lot of food. She found a box of uncooked pasta in the cabinet and poured all of it into a pot of boiling water. That should be enough.

She heard Luna behind her. "Hi Mom," said Luna.

"Hey sweetie." Max turned around. Luna had black hair, but she'd inherited her mother's freckles. She also had an "I need to talk to you" face. "What's on your mind?"

"Grace asked me about my dad," said the girl.

Max knew as well as anyone that Luna didn't have a dad. Biologically, sure, but that guy didn't even know she existed. Max had been a single mother since the day Luna was born. The hospital staff had definitely questioned her situation, and honestly so did Max, but she managed.

That didn't mean Max was the only adult in the house. When Luna was three, the two had moved to Elle's house. The decision had been purely practical; Elle needed another person to help her with childcare. When the kids were older, Max had considered getting her own place again, but she never did. It was a strange arrangement, but it worked.

"Just tell her that you don't have one," said Max. "Lots of kids are

raised by single moms.” Okay, that was an exaggeration, but single moms were a well-known phenomenon.

“Most single moms are divorced or widowed.” said Luna. “You’re different. You’ve always been a single mom.” She swallowed. “I told Grace that, and she said, “so tour mom’s like the Virgin Mary?”

Max suppressed a laugh. Did a middle schooler *seriously* compare her to a biblical figure? “I don’t know what they teach kids these days, but you are not a child of God. You are a child of myself and a bartender I haven’t seen in ages.”

Luna’s eyes widened. “A *bartender*?” she asked.

Max nodded. “We’ll have to have that discussion later. For now, tell Grace that I am not the Virgin Mary.”

“Okay.” said Luna. Then she smirked. “Maybe the bartender was God in disguise?”

“I think God has better things to do than mix tequila and flirt with redheads.” said Max. “Tell the boys it’s almost time for dinner.”

Luna went over to the bottom of the stairs and shouted “DINNER!”

“It’s not ready yet!” said Max. “I said ‘almost’.”

The boys were coming downstairs; she’d have to explain it to them. She’d also have to figure out what to do when Elle and her boyfriend came home. Hopefully the kids would talk about school and they’d avoid any awkwardness.

Dinner went fairly smoothly. Elle’s boyfriend turned out to be a pretty nice guy, and the boys wanted to talk to him about sports and guy stuff. Since they didn’t live with grown men, it was always exciting when one visited.

“I feel bad for the boys.” said Max after the guy left. “They don’t have a dad around to do father-son stuff with them. They have us and they have Ted, but it’s just not the same.”

"I grew up in an illegal lab." said Elle. "It could be way worse."

"True." said Max. Her own stepfather was kind of a jerk, anyway.

Luna came downstairs. "Hey, Luna," said Max, "wanna tell Elle what happened today?"

Luna looked at Elle. "Do you want to hear about it?" she said.

Elle shrugged. "Why not?" she said.

Luna sat down across from the two women. "This girl at school- her name's Grace- asked me about my dad. I told her that I don't have one, and she said..."

"She thought I was the Virgin Mary or something." said Max, chuckling.

Elle laughed. "You? The Virgin Mary?"

"I know." said Max. "It's ridiculous."

"It got me thinking," said Luna, "about my family- our family. You're my mom, and Jimmy and Peter are basically my brothers, and you're they're mom, but if they're my brothers, that means... you're also my mom, which means I have two moms, but you're not..."

Max knew where she was going with this. There was only one situation where a child had two moms, and it did not apply to their household.

"You do not have two moms." said Max. "You have one mom and Elle is my friend and housemate."

"But you two don't act like friends or housemates." said the teen. "You act like my friend's parents, except you're not a couple. You're..." Luna scrunched up her face. Evidently she didn't have a word for what she was describing. Neither did Max.

Finally, Luna spoke. "You know Robin Buckley and her girlfriend?" she said. That was the last thing Max expected her to say. "You two are like them, but you're not lesbians; you're straight."

You're straight girlfriends."

Max and Elle laughed. "Straight girlfriends." said Elle. "Sounds odd, but I like it."

"I like it too, but that does *not* leave the house." said Max. Once a mother, always a mother.

Elle stood up. "I'm going to bed." she said.

"So am I." said Max.

Max and Elle shared a room. When the kids were little, Max and Luna had slept in the same room, but Luna was too old for that. Now Max's options were to move her bed into Elle's room or sleep on the couch. She chose the former. Luckily, she'd been through this before in college.

When Max was in college, she would never in a million years have thought this would happen. She'd figured she'd either get married or remain single and childless for life. She had never even intended to actually have a child(hence the bartender conversation). And she *definitely* didn't intend on living with Elle Wheeler and co-parenting her children. So no, she absolutely, totally, 100% did not choose the life she led now.

That didn't mean she didn't enjoy every second of it.